

THE
GREAT AUDIT;
OR
GOOD STEWARD.

BEING SOME
NECESSARY AND IMPORTANT CONSIDERA-
TIONS TO BE CONSIDERED OF
BY ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE.

TAKEN OUT OF
(THAT LATE WORTHY AND RENOWNED JUDGE)
SIR MATTHEW HALE'S
WRITINGS.

AND THEREIN HIS OWN EXPERIENCE OF THE INWARD AND INVIA-
SIBLE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

The Righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.
PSAL. cxii. 6.

THE THIRTEENTH EDITION.

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Mr BAXTER's Character of JUDGE HALE.

SIR Matthew Hale, that unwearied student; that prudent man; that solid philosopher; that famous lawyer; that pillar and basis of justice (who would not have done an unjust act for any worldly price or motive); that godly, serious, practical Christian, the lover of goodness and all good men: That great contemner of the riches, pomp, and vanity of the world; who while he fled from the honour that pursued him, was yet made Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench, his being Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, living and dying with the most universal love and honour and praise, that ever did any English subject in this age, or any that just history doth acquaint us with, &c.

JUDGE HALE was a person well known, yet unknown: a public, yet hidden man, whose state was, and is as yet known but to few.

He that reads this little book, in a serious and weighty mind, may, as in a glass, plainly see how it is between God and his own soul.

What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose. Psal. xxx. 12.

This little tract is a treasure worth keeping, and to be often perused by people of all persuasions; for we must all come to judgment, to give an account of our talents and stewardship.

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THE
G R E A T A U D I T;
O R
G O O D S T E W A R D.

Being some Necessary and Important CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

Concerning my Conscience.

I HAVE been very diligent to keep my conscience clean, to encourage it in the vicegerency, that THOU (the great LORD of the world) hast given it over my soul and actions. I have kept it in the throne, and greatest reverence and authority in my heart.

In actions to be done or omitted, I have always advised with it, and taken its advice: I have neither stifled, nor forced, nor bribed it; but gave it a free liberty to advise and speak out, and a free subjection of my will, purposes, and actions to it.

If, through importunity of temptations, &c. I have at any time done amiss, I have not taken her up short, or stopped her mouth, or my own attention to her chiding

and reproof; but I have, with much submission of mind, borne her chastisement, and improved it to an humbling of myself before THEE for my failings; for I looked upon her as acting by THY authority, for THY service, and to THY glory; and I durst not discourage, discountenance, or disobey her.

When she was pleased, and gave me good words, I was glad; for I esteemed her as a glass, that represented to my soul the favour or displeasure of GOD himself, and how HE stood affected towards me.

I have trembled more under the fear of a feared or discouraged conscience, than under the fear of a sharp or scrupulous conscience; because I always accounted the latter, though more troublesome, yet more safe.

I have been very jealous either of wounding, or grieving, or discouraging, or deadening my conscience. I have therefore chosen rather to forbear that which seemed but indifferent, lest there should be somewhat in it that might be unlawful; and would rather gratify my conscience with being too scrupulous, than displease, disquiet, or flat it by being too venturous: I have still chosen rather to forbear what might be probably lawful, than to do that which might possibly be unlawful; because I could not err in the former, though I might in the latter.

I have been careful to advise impartially with my conscience before my actions; but lest I had committed any thing amiss, either in the nature or manner of the action,

tion, I commonly every night brought my actions of the day past before the judicatory of my conscience, and left her to a free and impartial censure of them; and what she sentenced well done, I, with humility, returned the praise thereof to thy name; what she sentenced done amiss, I did humbly sue to thee for pardon, and for grace to prevent me in the like miscarriages. By this means I kept my conscience active, renewed and preserved my peace with thee, and learned vigilance and caution for the time to come.

Touching THY Creatures.

I HAVE not only looked upon thy blessings and bounty, in lending me thy own creatures for my use; but I have sought unto thee for a blessing upon them, in my use of them. I did very well observe, that there is by my sin a curse in the very creatures that I receive, unless thy blessing fetch it out; an emptiness in them, unless thy goodness fill them: Though thou shouldest give me quails and manna from heaven, yet without thy blessing on them, they would become rottenness and putrefaction to me; and therefore I ever begged thy blessings themselves; and attributed the good I found or was to expect in them, to the same hand that gave them.

I received and used thy creatures as committed to me under a trust, and as a steward and accomptant for them; therefore I was always careful to use them according to those limits and in order to those ends for which thou didst commit them to me. 1st, With temperance and moderation; I did not use thy creatures to

luxury and excess, to make provisions for my lusts with vain-glory or ostentation, but for the convenient support of the exigencies of my nature and condition ; and if at any time thy goodness did indulge me in a use of them for delight, as well as necessity, I did but rarely and watchfully, I looked not upon the wine when it gave its colour in the cup, nor gave myself over either to excess or curiosity in meats or drinks ; I have checked myself therein, as being in thy presence, and still remembered I had thy creatures under an account ; and was ever careful to avoid excess or intemperance, because every excessive cup and meal was in danger to leave me somewhat in debt and arrear to my LORD.

2dly, With mercy and compassion to the creatures themselves, which thou hast put under my power and disposal. When I consider the admirable powers of life and sense which I saw in the birds and beasts, and all the men in the world could not give the like being to any thing, nor restore that life and sense which is once taken from them : When I considered how innocently and harmlessly the fowls, and fish, and sheep, and oxen, take their food, that thou, the LORD of all, hast given them ; I have been apt to think that surely thou didst intend a more innocent kind of food to man, than such as must be taken with such detriment to those living parts of thy creation ; and although thy wonderful goodness hath so much indulged mankind, as to give up the lives of these creatures for the food of man by the express commission, yet I still do and ever did think, that there was a justice due from man, even to these sensible creatures, that he should take them sparingly for necessity,

and

and not for delight ; or if for delight, yet not for luxury. I have been apt to think, that if there were any more liberal use of creatures for delight or variety, it should be of fruits, or such other delicacy as might be had without the loss of life : But however it be, this very consideration hath made me very sparing and careful, not vainly, or superfluously, or unnecessarily, or prodigally, to take away the life of thy creatures for feasting and excess. And the very same consideration hath gone along with me in reference to the labour of the creatures, as from man to man : and that an excessive, immoderate, unseasonable use of the creatures labour, is an injustice for which he must account.

To deny domestic creatures their convenient food ; to exact that labour from them that they are not able to perform ; to use extremity or cruelty towards them ; is a breach of that trust under which the dominion of the creatures was committed to us, and a breach of that justice that is due from men to them ; and therefore I have always esteemed it as part of my duty, and it hath been always my practice, to be merciful to my beasts ; and upon the same account I have ever esteemed it a breach of trust, and have accordingly declined any cruelty to any of thy creatures, and as much as I might prevented it to others, as a tyranny inconsistent with the trust and stewardship that thou hast committed to me. I have abhorred those sports that consist in the torturing of the creatures ; and if either noxious creatures must be destroyed, or creatures for food must be taken, it hath been my practice to do it in that manner that may be with the least torture or cruelty to the creature ;

and I have still thought it an unlawful thing to destroy those creatures for recreation sake, that either were not hurtful when they lived, or are not profitable when they are killed; ever remembering, that though thou hast given us dominion over thy creatures, yet it is under a law of justice, prudence, and moderation, otherwise we should become tyrants, not lords, over thy creatures; and therefore those things of this nature, that others have practised as recreations, I have avoided as sins.

Touching my Body.

MY body, which was given to serve and obey, became the empress, and commanded and corrupted my soul, embased and enslaved it to lust and disorder: and my soul, which was given to rule, became but a slave of my body. I considered, that if the business was thus carried on, my happiness must be only in this life, and that when death seized upon me, I had an *immortal soul* that had lost her time wholly in this world, and therefore could expect nothing but vexation and everlasting confusion to all eternity, &c. Upon these, and the like considerations, I resolved and practised severity over my body, and refused to gratify her intemperate desires; denied them, kept them in awe, and under discipline; and because I found that my lusts grew unruly by variety and curiosity of *meats* and *drinks*, I subdued them by moderate diet and temperance. My table was sparing to myself, my cloaths plain, my retinue and attendance but necessary; I chased away my lusts with the contemplations of the presence of God, the end of *Christ's* sufferings, the certainty yet uncertainty of death, the state af-
ter

ter death; and mingled all my enjoyments and desires with these serious and cleansing considerations; and I peremptorily refused to gratify the cravings of an inordinate sensual appetite, and did resolutely let them know, they should not, might not, expect any better dealing from me; and my practice was accordingly.

Concerning my Wealth.

THE more I had the more was my care, and the greater the charge that I had under my hands, and the more was my solicitude to be a faithful steward of it, to the honour and use of my master; but my part was the least that was in it. Indeed I rejoiced in this, that my master esteemed me faithful, committing the dispensation thereof to my trust; but I thought it no more mine than the lord's bailiff or the merchant's cash-keeper thinks his master's rents or money his; and therefore thought it would be a breach of my trust to consume or embezzle that wealth in excessive superfluities of meat, drink, or apparel, or in advancing myself or my posterity to a massy or huge acquest.

Touching my Reputation.

THOUGH I have loved my reputation, and have been vigilant not to lose or impair it by my own default or neglect, yet I have looked upon it as a brittle thing, a thing that the devil aims to hit in a special manner, a thing that is much in the power of a false report, a mistake or misapprehension, to wound and hurt; notwithstanding all my care, I am at the mercy of others, without God's wonderful, over-ruling Providence. And

as my reputation is the esteem that others have of me, so that esteem may be blemished without my default, I have therefore always taken this care, not to set my heart upon my reputation. I will use all fidelity and honesty, and take care it shall not be lost by any default of mine; and if notwithstanding all this, my reputation be foiled by evil or envious men or angels, I will patiently bear it, and content myself with the serenity of my own conscience.

The aforesaid Author, in his book Of the nature of True Religion, &c. p. 17. &c.

TRUE Religion teaches and tutors the soul to a high reverence and veneration of Almighty God, a sincere and upright walking as in the presence of the invisible, all-seeing God. It makes a man truly to love, to honour, to obey him, and therefore careful to know what his will is: It renders the heart highly thankful to him, both as his Creator, Redeemer, and Benefactor: It makes a man entirely to depend upon him, to seek him for guidance, direction, and protection, to submit to his will with all patience and resignation of soul: It gives the law not only to his words and actions, but to his very thoughts and purposes, that he dares not entertain thoughts unbecoming the sight and presence of that God, to whom all our thoughts are legible: It teacheth and bringeth a man to such a deportment both of external and internal sobriety, as may be decent in the presence of God and all his holy Angels

Angels: It crusheth and casts down all pride and haughtiness, both in a man's heart and carriage, and gives him an humble frame of soul and life, both in the sight of God and men: It regulates and governs the passions of the mind, and brings them into due moderation and frame: It gives a man a right estimate of this present world, and sets the heart and hopes above it, so that he never loves it more than it deserves: It makes the wealth and the glory of this world, high places, and great preferments, but of a low and little value to him; so that he is neither covetous, nor ambitious, nor over-solicitous concerning the advantages of it: It brings a man to that frame, to that righteousness, justice, honesty, and fidelity, as if they were part of his nature; he can sooner die than commit or purpose that which is unjust, dishonest, or unworthy a good man. It makes him value the love of God, and peace of conscience, above all the wealth and honour in the world, and to be very vigilant to keep it inviolably:—He performs all his duties to God in sincerity and integrity; and whilst he lives on earth, yet his conversation, his hopes, his treasure is in heaven; and he entirely endeavours to walk suitably to such a hope: This man hath the life of religion in him, and that life acts in him, and will conform his soul to the image of his Saviour, and to walk along with him to all eternity.

GOD hath given to the sons of men *, in respect of sensual things, objects not only for necessity but delight; but here is their misery as well as their sin, that they rest not in what God lawfully allows.—And hence it is that the God of mercy curses, and that most justly,

* *Knowledge of God*, p. 286, 287.

justly, his own blessings unto that man that thus perverts the use of them. *Wine* rejoiceth the heart of man, as it was given for that end; but when a man in the use of it looks no higher but to satiate himself, there is a sting put into it, and it proves a serpent. Prov. xxiii. 52.

Touching the Conscience.

CONSCIENCE is God's vicegerent in man *, and when her Lord is angry the conscience will chide: It is a glass wherein a man may, by reflection, see the face of heaven and his own soul.

If thy conscience blame thee, though never so little, despise it not, nor neglect this secret check; it is a message from heaven that summons thee to thy duty, p. 372.

Certainly the sense of the love of God is either not at all, or not awake, when any man considerately commits the least sin against his conscience, p. 297.

The direction of conscience, when it is well used, is seldom without the immediate direction of the very spirit of God; but if the guidance of that spirit be neglected, it will not return to thy assistance when thou pleasest, p. 369.

There is nothing in the world conduceth more to the composure and tranquillity of the mind, than the serenity and clearness of the conscience; keep but that safe and untainted, the mind will enjoy a calm and tranquillity

* *Knowledge of God*, p. 269.

quillity in the midst of all the storms of the world: and although the waves beat, and the seas work, and the winds blow, the mind that hath a clear conscience within, will be as stable and as safe from perturbation as a rock in the midst of a tempestuous sea, and will be a Goshen to, and within itself, when the rest of the world without is like an Egypt for plagues and darknes.

Whatever thou dost hazard or lose, keep the integrity of thy conscience both before troubles come and under them; it is a jewel will make thee rich in the midst of poverty, a sun that will give thee light in the midst of darknes, a fortress that will keep thee safe in the greatest danger, and that is never to be taken from thee, unless thou thyself betray it and deliver it up.

*Judge HALE's Experience of the inward and invisible
Guidance of the Spirit of God.*

THOSE that truly fear God have a secret guidance from a higher wisdom than what is barely human, namely, *the spirit of truth and wisdom*, that doth really and truly, but secretly, prevent and direct them. Any man that sincerely and truly fears Almighty God, relies upon him, and calls upon him for his guidance and direction, hath it as really as a son hath the counsel and direction of his father. And though the voice be not audible, nor the direction always perceptible (or discernible) to sense, yet it is equally as real as if a man heard the voice saying, *This is the way, walk in it.*

And

14 THE INWARD GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT.

And this secret direction of Almighty God is principally seen in matters relating to the good of the soul, yet it may also be found in the concerns of this life, which a good man, that fears God, and begs his direction, shall very often, if not at all times, find.

I can call my own experience to witness, that even in the external actions of my whole life, I was never disappointed of the best guidance and direction when I have in humility and sincerity implored the secret direction and guidance of the divine wisdom.

The observation of the secret admonition of the spirit of God in the heart, as it is an effectual means to cleanse and sanctify thy heart, and the more it is attended unto, the more it will be conversant with thy soul for thy instruction.—In the midst of thy difficulties, it will be thy counsellor; in the midst of thy temptations, it will be thy strength, and grace sufficient for thee; in the midst of thy troubles, it will be thy light and thy comforter: Only beware thou neglect not the voice of this spirit; it may be thy neglect may quench it, and thou mayest never hear that voice more.

It is impossible for thee to enjoy that which must make thee happy, till thou are deeply sensible of thy own emptiness and nothingness, and thy spirit thereby brought down and laid in the dust.—The spirit of Christ is an humbling spirit; the more thou hast of it the more it will humble thee; and it is a sign that either thou hast it not, or that it is yet over-master'd by thy corruptions, if thy heart be still haughty.

Watch

Watch therefore the secret persuasions and dissuasions of the spirit of God, and beware thou quench it not, nor grieve it. Be sure thou observe this voice—This wind that blows where it lists, if shut out, resisted, or grieved, may haply never breath upon thee again, but leave thee to be hardened in thy sins; but if observed and obeyed, thou shalt be sure to have it thy monitor and director upon all occasions; when thou goest, it will lead thee; when thou sleepest, it will keep thee; and when thou awakest, it will talk with thee.

These are faithful, weighty, and true sayings: happy are those that witness them so to be.

F I N I S.